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Sen. Hardiman praises approved changes to sex-offender registry laws affecting minors

LANSING – The Senate today unanimously passed a package of bills that would more fairly deal with minors convicted of nonviolent criminal sexual conduct while ensuring that violent or repeat offenders remain on the registry, Sen. Bill Hardiman, R-Kentwood, announced.

The legislation, House Bills 4920, 5195 and 5240, would allow certain minors and young people to petition the court to be removed from the Sex Offender Registry. The registry allows Michigan residents to search to see if a convicted sex offender lives near them.

“Justice demands that we deal strongly with criminal sexual conduct,” Hardiman said. “Fairness demands that we also provide a means for some people in narrow circumstances to appear before a judge again to make their case to come off the registry.”

Supporters of the legislation particularly come from parents of young people who have been found guilty of age-based, nonviolent sex crimes. Additionally, supporters have shown that young offenders have low levels of recidivism if they receive proper counseling.

“These bills allow young people a second chance when it’s deserved while still protecting the public from violent criminals,” Hardiman said. “Studies show that young people, when treated properly, don’t recommit the same crimes. Children and young people mature as they grow up, and we should recognize that.”

These bills won’t automatically remove people from the registry. They would only be able to petition a judge and that judge would have to determine whether they qualify for removal off the list. Other offenders would remain on the registry for 25 years to life.

The law allows those convicted of a sex crime to be removed from the registry if they are no more than three years older than the victim in cases of statutory rape or if the convicted is younger than 13 years old for any criminal sexual conduct offense.

Hardiman chairs the Senate Families and Human Services Committee, which reported the bills. The bills now head back to the House of Representatives for consideration of Senate changes.